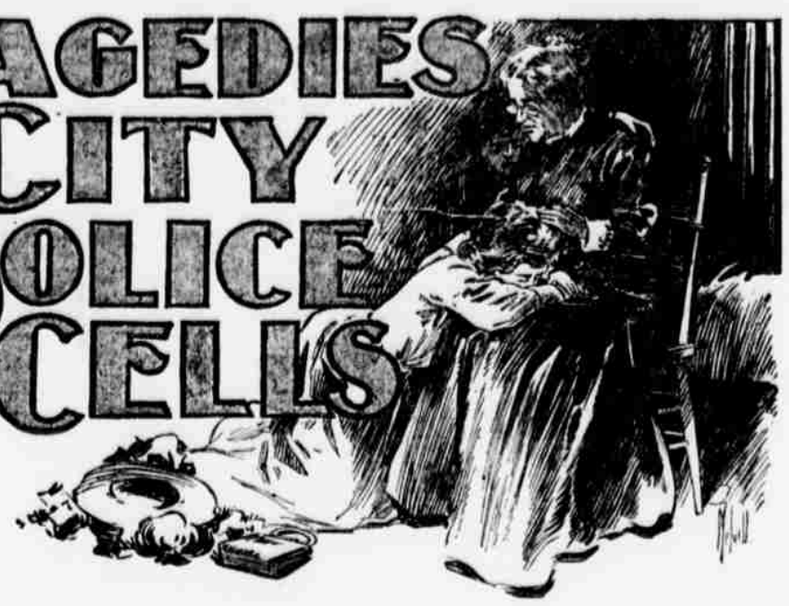
TRAGEDIES IN CITY POLICE CELLS



Brooklyn.—It was a quiet day in the police station. Brownsville was behaving itself and the matron of the station had a whole hour to talk, with only one interruption to wipe the tears from the eyes of a small, dirty boy, induce him to tell the address of his home and send him on his way under the guidance of a big, strong bluecoat. And the matron, when she talks, has a few things to tell. In fact, Mrs. Cox says, with her good Irish chuckle, that she thinks she will write a book of her experiences to make her rich after she retires from the job of matron. The "boys" have suggested it to her. The "boys" are the bluecoats, every one of whom in Brooklyn, knows Mrs. Cox and has a joke for her or a word of guying when he meets her.

Duties of a Police Matron.

Intoxication is the usual charge upon which the woman prisoner is committed, with occasional charges of theft, of assault, an attempted suicide and now and then a woman whose hands have committed some bigger crime, homicide or infanticide. Whatever the charge, they all pass through the station house on their way to the jail or the penitentiary, and the matron has them in her care. She gets them fresh from their misdemeanors and with the stain of their crimes new upon them. She is the first and often the only ministering angel they know, for it is to the task of ministering that most of the matrons, womenlike, give themselves, with more heartiness than to the technical tasks of their office.

As I sat in the comfortable little apartment of the matron, flooded with morning sunshine, each of the homely objects in the room, and even the pictures on the walls, seemed to have something to whisper of the stories that have been told in those rooms, of the depravity they have looked upon, of the pitiable wrecks of womanhood they have seen pass through this room to the iron-barred cells beyond. Of some of these crippled creatures and their stories the matron told me. Fourteen years of the life has not calloused her sensibilities but, instead, sharpened her sympathies, and for all the endless stream that comes her way she can listen to each of their stories, pity them and hold out a hand to help if they have not gone too far to be beyond helping. Sometimes the judicious, quick intercession of the matron can do a great deal to check a young offender in the downward course; at any rate, a kind word never hurts even the most lowly.

Young Girls Saved.

One night two young girls were brought into the station house for intoxication, fresh, dainty girls, dressed in the finest of evening gowns, covered with long coats. It was New Year's eve and a bitter cold night. The matron was used to the unusual, but the presence of girls such as these in her lodging house made her stop and wonder. It was only a little while before the sleep of intoxication wore off and the girls woke to the realization of their surroundings and the horror of it. Finally, they were calm enough to tell the matron how it all happened. They had been over to Manhattan to a dance with two boy friends. It was so icy cold that the escorts suggested before they crossed the bridge to take something to warm them, and they stopped in a cafe and drank what the men ordered for them. Unused to taking stimulants as soon as they struck the cold air out of doors the drinks went to their heads and they knew very little else of what happened until they waked to find themselves in the police station. What had happened was that the two escorts, finding themselves burdened with girls too much intoxicated to know what was happening to them, had opened the door of a tenement house, shoved them in and left them there. The girls had fallen immediately to sleep and one of the occupants of the house stumbling over them, had reported to the police and had them taken to the station. It was a hideous night for those girls, used only to the niceties and refinements of life.

When the next morning came, with its inevitable appearance at court, they pleaded not to be taken in the patrol wagon with the other prisoners and the matron secured the permission of the sergeant to take them to court herself in the car, and arranged for a private hearing before the judge. The circumstances related, the judge let them off with some strong words of admonition. Then the matron took the girls to their home, where they found a mother almost frantic. The matron put in a plea for them and saved them the upbraiding that most parents would have poured forth for such an indiscretion. Now, every Christmas since the happening there comes to the station a gift from those two girls, a bit of their own handiwork, and now and then a letter from their mother, reiterating her appreciation for the saving of her girls.

Maggie a Regular Lodger.

With some of the prisoners the matrons become old friends, for they almost make the station house their regular dwelling place. One of Mrs. Cox's old-timers is an Irish woman, named Maggie, whom everybody in the station house knows. She has been a habitue of station houses for 15 years, and the matrons and sergeants get so they look for her and almost miss her when she doesn't come. She is one of the cheerful drinkers and always comes in with a swagger and a laugh. The matron will greet her with a sort of despairing smile: "Well, Maggie, are you back again?"

"Sure, and ain't you glad to see me? I keep you alive, give you something to live for."

And she does keep things alive, Mrs. Cox admits. She sings her Irish

songs at the top of her great Irish voice, and keeps everybody in the station awake with her song. She makes herself perfectly at home in the tiny cubby-hole of a cell and sinks into a sleep as peaceful as a child's when she has exhausted herself with singing. It takes a vigorous effort to make her get up in time for court.

Enlivens Station with Song.

Remonstrance with her is useless, the matrons have learned her long ago. Sometimes they ask her if she isn't ashamed to come so often to the station house, and she always makes the same answer. "No; the city's willing for me to stay here and I'll come as often as I like. It's much more comfortable than home. It's cleaner and I like the electric lights."

She has such a ready good humor and such a spirit of fun that in spite of her waywardness Maggie is rather a favorite in the station and with the judges. After one of her last visits to the police station Maggie pleaded penitence to the judge and promised to walk the straight and narrow path in the future if the judge would let her go. So the magistrate did give her the chance, threatening dire consequences if she appeared before him again soon. The very next night Maggie was brought into the station house with her usual hilarity, but gorgeously arrayed. She made no apologies for her downfall, but explained that when she went from the station house the day before she had found a letter from her sister containing $15. She took $7 of it and bought a new skirt, a new shirt waist and an enormous brass chain; with the other $8 she went to a saloon to come out minus the money and in the custody of a policeman. Once during one of her visits to the station Magige grew despondent. She thought of her two daughters who are placed in a Catholic home, safe from her influence, and she began to brood. She got hold of a string and decided to choke herself with it. To make the thing more effective she called to Mrs. Cox to tell her what she was going to do. The matron was used to Maggie, however, and to threats of suicide, so she answered carelessly: "Go ahead, Maggie, you've no idea how quickly we would get you out of here; get you out much quicker dead than alive, because we don't want any dead ones around here." Whereupon Maggie burst into one of her peals of laughter and declared it was no use committing suicide in the face of such discouragement.

There are only a few that take the world so cheerfully under the influence of drink. Many of the cases that come under the eye of the police matron are of women who have been led to the passion for drink to drown some sorrow, and many of them women used to better ways of living. One day a frail bit of a woman—a mere girl—was brought to the station. Her husband had got out a warrant for her and wanted to have her committed to some institution. Drink had made terrible ravages in the woman's appearance, and when the effects of the whisky began to wear off she sat in her cell clinging with her thin hands to the bars and begging pitifully for drink. Toward dawn the woman collapsed and a hurry call was sent to the hospital. The ambulance surgeon on his arrival had only time to kneel at her side and begin his work before death closed upon her.

Woman's Pitiful Story.

While the woman lay trembling in the cell during the night she had told her story to the woman outside the bars, of how the craving had grown upon her little by little until she lost all power over herself. At 23 she was a hopeless wreck. The closing act of the little tragedy was when the mother came from her home in the country, near New York, and insisted on seeing the place where her girl had died. The matron begged and pleaded with her not to look at the cell; that it would be something she could never forget, but the mother demanded to see it, and as soon as she looked into the bare place, fell in a collapse, and an ambulance had to be called to care for her.

"The lady" was once a figure well known in all the police stations, but "the lady" is one of the figures that has passed, whose life hurried her to a pitiful end before she reached what should have been her prime. The matrons all called her "the lady," because even in her worst days she never looked anything but the lady, was always well dressed and never came to the police station without her well-fitting gloves carefully buttoned, though sometimes she was picked out of the gutter in an almost hopelessly deadened condition. Her story is one that might have been the thread of some of the stories one used to read in the Sunday school libraries, though it comes with much more force to hear the police matron who saw her in the last days of her degradation tell it.

She had spent her girlhood in the country at her father's home upon the Hudson, where they took city boarders in the summer time. The girl was as pretty as a picture, had been carefully reared and well educated. One summer there came the inevitable man from the city that won the heart of the country girl, and they were married and came to Brooklyn to live. All went as happy as a marriage bell for a while. There was a little girl baby after whose coming the young wife was not very strong, and the doctor ordered milk punches every day. The young woman began to like the punches and wanted two instead of one a day, then after a while she began to take the brandy without the milk and soon she found the habit fixed on her strongly. The husband bore with her and did everything that could be done, but things went from bad to worse until the habit fastened itself so that there was first a visit to the police station, and after the first a second and a third.

The woman, whose life had been guarded as carefully as any girl's could be, who had been used in her young days to take nothing stronger than milk or sweet cider, began to become used to the walls of a cell and to bow in abject slavery to the taste of whisky. Sometimes she would plead with the matron to go and intercede with her husband and promise better things, and many a time has Mrs. Cox gone with the plea. Always it was granted and the same result would follow and "the lady" would be back in the station house crazed with drink. The baby girl grew up into a beautiful young woman, who would come after dark to visit her mother in the cell and plead with her. It was like trying to check the north wind. The passion swept down everything in its pathway. One day Mrs. Cox was sent for to come to a consumptive home, and there she found "the lady" in the last stages of the disease. She wanted to say goodby and to offer thanks for the little kindnesses of the old days.

Made Nursery of Station.

One day not long ago a 14-year old girl brought in a dirty little baby and said the child was lost. The baby spent the afternoon peaceably sleeping on the big quilt the matrons keep for the purpose, and about five o'clock a man came in and asked the matron: "Have you got for me a baby?"

The matron assured him that she hoped it was for him, as she was anxious to turn the infant over to somebody. The baby was properly identified and the man started off with it, complacently, when the matron asked where his wife was that she had left the child uncalled for all afternoon. She had gone out, the man answered, and she had telephoned to him at his place of work over in Manhattan to call at the police station on his way home to get the babe. The man was told very plainly that the next time his wife wanted to go shopping she was not to send her baby to the police stations as a nursery.

"Shoplifter" a Puzzle.

The shoplifter is often the puzzle to the matron of the Adams street station. They come in great numbers from the poor, shabby woman, who has stolen a few pairs of socks, or a little frock for her baby, whom she longs to have dressed like the babies of her well-to-do neighbors, to the woman of apparent wealth, who has secreted some seemingly useless trifle. One woman, faultlessly gowned and of undoubted culture and good breeding, who offered $500 not to be made to sleep in a cell had been arrested for taking three pairs of 50-cent gloves. She was indignant at her arrest, but she didn't deny the theft merely offered to pay for the gloves. That was a case out of many such that Mrs. Boylan recalls from her experiences at the Adams street station, one of the things no one can explain. They call it kleptomania with the rich and thievery with the poor, who, at least, have the plea of necessity to lend palliation to their guilt.

These are the ordinary happenings in the life of the police matron. Their days and nights are a ceaseless round of watching the intoxicated, of standing by to keep the suicide from her intention, of dressing the woman with delirium tremens, who tears her clothes to shreds in the night, of hearing over and over the stories of wretchedness and misery and depravity.

AN OLD PAINTER'S IDEAS.

The autumn season is coming more and more to be recognized as a most suitable time for housepainting. There is no frost deep in the wood to make trouble for even the best job of painting, and the general seasoning of the summer has put the wood into good condition in every way. The weather, moreover, is more likely to be settled for the necessary length of time to allow all the coats to thoroughly dry, a very important precaution. An old and successful painter said to the writer the other day: "House owners would get more for their money if they would allow their painters to take more time, especially between coats. Instead of allowing barely time for the surface to get dry enough not to be 'tacky,' several days (weeks would not be too much) should be allowed so that the coat might set through and through. It is inconvenient, of course, but, if one would suffer this slight inconvenience, it would add two or three years to the life of the paint." All this is assuming, of course, that the paint used is the very best to be had. The purest of white lead and the purest of linseed oil unmixed with any cheaper of the cheap mixtures often known as "White Lead," and oil which has been doctored with fish oil, benzine, corn oil or other of the adulterants known to the trade are used, all the precautions of the skilled painter are useless to prevent the cracking and peeling which make houses unsightly in a year or so and therefore, make painting bills too frequent and costly. House owner should have his painter bring the ingredients to the premises separately, white lead of some well known reliable brand and linseed oil of equal quality and mix the paint just before applying it. Painting need not be expensive and unsatisfactory if the old painter's suggestions are followed.

ANYTHING FOR FILTHY LUCRE

Writer's Cynical Justification of Mean Piece of Work.

A certain gifted writer of whom it was once said that he wouldn't recognize his wife if he met her on the street wrote a charming love story not so long ago, and it was printed in a popular magazine. His friends and all those of the circle in which the author moved recognized the story as an exact and recent transcript from the life of the writer, involving a very beautiful young woman, also well known in the same set. One man, coming across the author, took him to task for it.

"What in the world did you write up that affair with Miss Blank for?" he demanded.

The author looked at him unmoved and with the same exquisite calm and clearness that characterized his work, replied:

"I needed the money."

FINEST TROUT IN THE WORLD

Found in Small Stream in the High Sierras, Says Expert.

The finest trout in the world, says Dr. Barton W. Evermann of the bureau of fisheries, is to be found in a little stream of the high Sierras in southern California called Volcano creek. The trout is named the "golden trout," and in beauty of coloring gameness and delicacy of flavor it has no equal.

So far as is known, it exists only in this stream, which is about 20 miles in length. President Roosevelt recently called attention of the bureau of fisheries to this unique specimen, with the result that Dr. Evermann was sent to California to study its habits and environment and to see whether it might not be introduced elsewhere.

He reports that the trout is in danger of extermination and that fishing in the stream must be prohibited by the state of California for three years if the trout is to be saved. Dr. Evermann has also recommended that the bureau of fisheries undertake the artificial propagation of the trout and co-operate with the state of California in transplating it to a number of barren streams that can be easily reached.—National Geographic Magazine.

A WINNING START.

A Perfectly Digested Breakfast Makes Nerve Force for the Day.

Everything goes wrong if the breakfast lies in your stomach like a mud pie. What you eat does harm if you can't digest it—it turns to poison.

A bright lady teacher found this to be true, even of an ordinary light breakfast of eggs and toast. She says:

"Two years ago I contracted a very annoying form of indigestion. My stomach was in such a condition that a simple breakfast of fruit, toast and egg gave me great distress.

"I was slow to believe that trouble could come from such a simple diet but finally had to give it up, and found a great change upon a cup of hot Postum and Grape-Nuts with cream, for my morning meal. For more than a year I have held to this course and have not suffered except when injudiciously varying my diet.

"I have been a teacher for several years and find that my easily digested breakfast means a saving of nervous force for the entire day. My gain of ten pounds in weight also causes me to want to testify to the value of Grape-Nuts.

"Grape-Nuts holds first rank at our table."

Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

"There's a reason." Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs.

A GARDEN TRANSPLANTER.

By Its Use the Plant and Earth Can Be Removed Without Disturbing Roots.

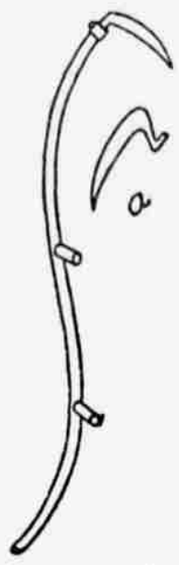
Some years ago I wished to extend our strawberry bed with the newly-formed plants, and as the conditions for transplanting in midsummer are not often favorable in central Kansas, where we then lived, I had to evolve a plan to move the soil with the plants, says a writer in the Rural New Yorker.

I had heavy tin cut in pieces 4½ by 11 inches. I wanted a strong wire turned in along one side, but the tinner was without the necessary machine and the best he could do was to turn the edges over twice, thus considerably strengthening the top of the tool. With a block of wood 3½ inches square for a form the two ends of the tins were bent at right angles to the central part, thus forming three sides of a hollow cube. Armed with three dozen of these, garden trowel and a wheelbarrow, I proceeded to the patch. A tin with a good plant in the center was forced into the ground with the foot, the trowel inserted along the open side of the square formed by the top of the tin and the tin containing the soil and plant was lifted and placed in the barrow. Proceeding until a full cargo was obtained the barrow was wheeled to the plot previously prepared and the tins with the plants all set in their proper places. Then spreading the wings slightly the tins readily slipped out, leaving the plants set with roots not in the least exposed or disturbed. The work was rapidly done and with perfect success even in sunny weather. The tins lasted several years and I used them for other small plants, as cabbage and tomato. If the soil is loose and not well held by the tin bend the wings nearer together, making the open side narrower.

A GOOD BRUSH HOOK.

Tool Easily Made Which Will Be Useful in Cutting Heavy Briers, Etc.

A hook for cutting bushes, heavy briers and such plants, which is simple and easily made by any blacksmith is shown in the cut, says the Farm and Home. Take a piece of cast steel one-quarter-inch square and ten inches long. Use one-half for the blade and the other half for the shank. Draw the end for the blade (a) down nearly to a point, then bend pretty well, as it will straighten in drawing to an edge. Have the bevel all on one side. Draw down true and thin. Then draw the shank down, tapering to the end and bend about one inch of the end down to go into the snath. An old scythe snath is just the thing. Fasten it to the snath with an old heel ring driven on the same as to fasten a scythe. Such a bush hook is light to handle. You can cut off a bush an inch or more in dimeter with ease. The blade needs about the same temper that you would give a knife. This is much handier than the ordinary bush hook. The blade is not so long, cumbersome nor heavy, and the ease of management will appeal to every farmer who handles it.



BARRACKS FOR HAY.

Convenient Shelter for the Surplus Hay Which Cannot Be Put in the Barn.

A subscriber sends to the Prairie Farmer a sketch of a hay barrack for storing the surplus hay or grain, instead of stacking, which we reproduce. These structures are familiar in many sections of the country. Their construction is simple, being merely

THE HAY BARRACK.

the setting of six or eight posts in the ground high enough for plates, over which the roof boards may be laid, as shown in the accompanying cut.

The advantage over stacking is that less hay is wasted from exposure to the weather, while in a considerable measure stacking in "catchy" weather is reduced to the minimum. A barrack properly made will last for many years and will prove of great convenience.

A Beneficient Weed.

A lady remarked to a representative of the Farmers' Review the other day that sweet clover had been introduced from Europe and had become a terrible weed. But it is a beneficent weed. It takes possession of the waste places and loves them best where the ground is hardest. It drives its roots deep into the soil and mellows it. On its roots feed the bacteria that create the tubercles. In their homes these bacteria manufacture into available nitrates the free nitrogen of the air. They thus plow the ground, fertilize it and make way for other plants.